

DIRECTOR OF THE NOAA CORPS

GUIDANCE TO FY08 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS

“Discretionary behavior is defined as that behavior which a person could do if they choose, but for which they would not be punished if they didn’t. It is what we commonly refer to as going above and beyond the call of duty”

Bringing Out the best in People, Measure of a Leader

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1. Never has there been a more exciting or rewarding time to serve in the NOAA Corps. The world is changing rapidly, and with it, we are confronting new challenges, threats, and hazards, as well as significant opportunities. As we navigate in this evolving world of the 21st Century, we cannot wait to be prompted by external events and perceptions that dictate the terms of change to us. We must be forward looking, adaptive, flexible, and responsive to emerging concerns and trends to succeed. We must build a NOAA Corps that continually senses change and continually adapts. We must build leadership that will best position the Service for today and the future. We must continually assess our skills and be engaged in lifelong learning regardless of rank or time in Service. Optimal mission execution requires much more than monitoring operations. Intelligence, curiosity to explore change, preparedness, and critical thinking skills are prerequisites to success. In addition, effective leadership goes beyond intelligence, technical expertise, and organizational knowledge. It requires a high degree of self-knowledge, emotional maturity, and interpersonal skills. We need officers who excel in this rapidly changing climate – leaders who employ innovative methods to solve problems; who work with partners within the government and their communities to best serve the American people; who understand the concept of managed risk; and who create an environment for subordinates that embraces change, diversity of thinking, and NOAA Corps core values.
2. The NOAA Corps today is more visible, trusted, and respected than at any time in our history. It is our agility, adaptability, and strong leadership that makes this possible. To sustain the public’s confidence and our superior mission execution, while evolving to meet national, and even global demands, we need officers who can do the following:
 - a. Continually Reinforce Core Values. Character is a fundamental condition and represents a standard of excellence. Officers must consistently reflect the NOAA Corps core values of Honor, Respect, and Commitment. Integrity and transparency are foremost among the traits that we expect in our leaders. Through personal example, conduct, and decisions – every day, on and off duty – officers must instill the culture of our core values in their people. Our people have come to expect transparency and we must continue to make this part of our culture.
 - b. Strategy Execution. We need to promote people who have the necessary technical expertise, management, and leadership skills to bring the NOAA strategy to life in our

operations, support, training, and workforce development, regardless of their mission. Officers you select for promotion must be our best leaders and managers - capable of reacting and adapting to a dynamic operating environment and committed to igniting passion, motivation, and innovation in our people. They must ensure that all NOAA men and women, whether in operations or support, NOAA Corps or civilian know their critical role in mission execution.

- c. Think Innovatively and Act with Conviction: When confronted with a crisis, our people do not hesitate to assess risk, develop a plan, and take swift and appropriate action. We must select officers who have this bias for action, who can think on their feet, and be innovative in solving problems. We need leaders who are team players, who exercise on-scene initiative and flexibility, and who can take and manage risk, while exercising appropriate restraint. Look for major accomplishments and discount minor errors. Officers should be out in front, even if their methods or ideas seem unconventional, as long as those methods comply with law, regulation, doctrine, and core values. Officers should also apply these principles to those who work with them, encouraging innovation, and helping their people apply the lessons learned for continuous systemic improvement. We must focus on the effects we are trying to achieve rather than activities and levels of effort.
- d. Be Capable of Operating in a Dynamic Environment: We are ready today, and always preparing for tomorrow. Officers must be adaptable and flexible to meet these evolving challenges and should demonstrate those traits in all that they do. They need to see opportunity in change, be able to readily adjust to changing circumstances, and lead with optimism and energy. Change is a permanent feature of our Service.
- e. Embrace Partnerships and Unity of Effort: We need officers who can operate and support operations in a linked and seamless fashion with partners, whether it is part of a major response to an event or in better serving the American public. We need officers who know how to form key and successful partnerships and coordinate efforts with NOAA and DOC components; DOD; other federal, state, and local agencies; and the private sector. We value the experience gained in joint and interagency assignments when those experiences are applied to improve the NOAA Corps. We must also be effective in the face of organizational stovepipes and hesitant partners.
- f. Build the Future Workforce: To sustain superior mission performance and best position the NOAA Corps for the future, we need an extremely well-trained, educated and diverse workforce. Diversity is not limited to the traditional areas of ethnicity, gender, color, and creed. Diversity is also the diversity of thought, experience, perspective, and culture. We need officers to lead the NOAA Corps who value differences, who are culturally attuned to the world in which we operate and the people in it, and who teach and mentor their people. Our officers must also be firmly committed to equal treatment and opportunity for all personnel, and through their actions, must promote diversity and foster cohesiveness and equal treatment in the workforce.

3. Regardless of the board, you should consider whether an officer has made meaningful or extraordinary contributions within his or her area of responsibility, either in supporting or executing NOAA Corps missions.
 - a. Our selection board system (commonly referred to as promotion boards) uses either a fully qualified or best-qualified standard for selecting officers. Selection boards are designed to select those officers meeting the appropriate standard without regard to their particular career paths.
 - b. Assignment panels and selection panels may consider career paths in the context of the specific panel's purpose as part of broader selection criteria.
4. In addition to looking for those qualities I mentioned above, these are some of the things you should watch out for as you evaluate officers' records:
 - a. Description of Duties: Given the changes in our organization over the past several years, many officers are serving in assignments that may not be fully understood solely by their titles. In your evaluation, ensure understanding of the full scope of the officers' duties and assignments; carefully review the "Description of Duties" block of the officers' OERs (block 2). You should pay close attention to the overall scope of authority and responsibilities for all positions, command and non-command, operations and support.
 - b. Assignments:
 - (1) Board members are reminded that while officers give input in their assignment process, ultimately, they are issued orders based on the needs of the Service. Boards should not base decisions on speculation as to why an officer was assigned to a certain billet or duty status.
 - (2) The NOAA Corps' operational excellence requires an array of skills and expertise. Every community contributes to our overall success. Each community is essential and provides its own path to leadership and technical proficiency, though opportunities for command may come at different levels and numbers depending on the community. Boards should consider operational or command assignments in the context of the composition of the current fleet, i.e. 299 officers is the absolute minimum number of officers needed to properly operate the current fleet. All officers must go to sea or fly, without exception. The board must select the best for the job, and therefore the board members shall place the appropriate weight on the operational or command assignment, whether it is based upon past performance or for future consideration. However, staff experience shall be a consideration as officers advance in rank because they must have the experience and knowledge to lead people, programs, and organizations.
 - c. Officer Evaluation Reports:

- (1) Numerous officers are serving throughout NOAA and interagency positions where they may have non-NOAA Corps supervisors. In reviewing performance for these officers, do not discount these records based upon the perception of unusually high or low marks or comments. Rather, consider the overall value these experiences bring to the NOAA Corps as we look to build our NOAA and inter-agency experience and talent. Reviewer comments are critical in these assignments.
 - (2) Officers may be detailed to full time university or advanced/specialized training. While assigned to these duties, the majority of OERs will consist solely of their course grades. There will not be, nor is there expected to be, detailed performance information while assigned to duty under instruction.
5. **FOR BOARDS CONSIDERING SELECTION TO O-2 AND O-3:** Officers primarily develop their specialty/ technical/professional expertise in the O1- O3 pay grades through assignments, on-the-job training, and formal education, or any combination of these. By developing expertise as junior officers, these officers not only contribute the expertise they have acquired, they lay the foundation for contributing to the Service at more senior levels.
6. **FOR BOARDS CONSIDERING SELECTION TO O-4 AND O-5:** By the time officers compete for promotion to these ranks, they are generally top performers. In addition to performing technical or specialized aspects of their assignments well, officers in the O-4 and O-5 grades must demonstrate that they possess the leadership, management, and professional skills necessary to obtain optimal performance from people. Today, the environment in which the NOAA Corps operates is increasingly complex and technologically oriented. As officers move into senior ranks, they must have an understanding of the major issues facing the NOAA Corps as a whole in order to best contribute, through their particular expertise, to the overall needs of the Service. This understanding of macro Service issues can be acquired through assignment diversity (different type of unit/different type of billet/different geographic location), participation in studies and task forces, and special assignments which provide a more comprehensive understanding of issues important to our Service.

Because of the dramatically increased scope of authority and responsibility for O-4 and O-5 positions, officers you select to serve in these grades must be able to make the leap from hands on management of the day-to-day details to empowering their people to perform those functions, while they take a strategic view, including a broad understanding of the interagency and even inter-governmental arenas. They must be capable of acting with vision in a complex and uncertain environment. They must have the ability to maintain our multi-mission effectiveness and functionality with the capability to make risk-based decisions under stressful circumstances. They must demonstrate the public acumen and capability to work cohesively with our NOAA, DOC, and interagency partners to optimize mission execution. They must understand how NOAA budgets and business systems impact operational outputs. The qualities that we look for in captains should be apparent in our best-qualified O-5s.

7. **FOR SELECTION TO O-6:** Captains greatly influence the success of the NOAA Corps, both internally and externally. They serve as the Director's senior field and headquarters representatives, NOAA program directors, and in positions of significant responsibility in

other agencies and military services. They are members of the Director's senior leadership team and must contribute substantially to the advancement of Service goals. The qualities that we look for in Flag officers should be apparent in our best-qualified O-6s.

- a. Vision: The world in which we operate is not static. The President and Congress created and fundamentally restructured organizations and relationships to address and mitigate emerging national threats and vulnerabilities. Our capabilities, competencies, organizational structure, and processes must change accordingly, and we need captains who articulate a vision, embrace change, work together, and act boldly and decisively to execute shared objectives that have been determined to best serve the national interest. This vision cannot be developed and nurtured without intellectual preparedness and the ability to continue to learn while leading at the highest levels in the Service.
- b. Leadership: The future of the NOAA Corps requires enlightened and empowering leaders in our captains. They drive the leadership and direction of the Service and must be stellar examples of all that we represent. They must be our very best leaders and have demonstrated the commitment to achieving NOAA's established goals and to empowering and nurturing the next generation of NOAA Corps leaders. They have a special responsibility to be at the forefront of advancing initiatives that benefit our people. They should be devoted leaders who energize their people and clearly convey to every member of the NOAA Team how his or her role contributes to mission execution and by extension, to visible, tangible national outcomes. They should be leaders who are collaborative, value transparency of information, and who are decisive.
- c. Partnering: Selectees must have the ability to excel at forming tactical, operational, and strategic partnerships within NOAA and in the joint and interagency arenas, as well as with state and local government, the private sector, and the international community. When needed, these skills must be up to the task of dealing with hesitant or uncooperative players. Similarly, selectees must be able to recognize when internal program-centric or parochial behavior exceeds expected stewardship responsibilities and forge unified organizational solutions.
- d. Public Presence: Selectees must have the knowledge, presence, confidence, and bearing to represent the federal government in situations of national interest. They must demonstrate political savvy and a level of professionalism reflective of both the excellence of the NOAA Corps and an ability to impact national-level policy processes. Captains must be articulate and persuasive advocates for NOAA. Continuing intellectual development and external awareness of national and international political, economic, and social issues and trends over the course of a career enable this capability.
- e. Knowledge and Information Management: Intellectual preparedness is the fuel for vision. Selectees must have a broad and in-depth intellectual capacity to learn, retain, and apply knowledge. They must have keen analytical skills and the ability to readily assimilate elements of information regarding unfamiliar subjects. They must be able

to make judgments on the quality of information provided through diverse mediums, and make good decisions in areas not within their area of expertise. They must value and effectively use information as a leadership tool to gain alignment and empower others to achieve organizational goals.

- f. Organizational Context: Selectees must have a demonstrated understanding of how the NOAA Corps fits into the broader structure of NOAA, the Department, Executive Branch, federal government, nation, and international community. Selectees must be able to identify the internal and external relationships that affect the NOAA Corps, NOAA, and the Department, approaching each situation with a clear perception of external reality, and recognizing the potential impact of the NOAA Corps courses of action. The roles and responsibilities of our senior leaders have always demanded political acumen. Our current challenges require an even higher level insight and continual engagement to best position the Service for future success.

8. **SELECTION BOARDS:** Officer Selection Boards are, in fact, creating the future of our Service. Our people above all else, have been the NOAA Corps' strength. Members of these boards are entrusted with the duty to ensure that our people continue to be our source of inspiration and excellence. The NOAA Corps and the Nation are depending on it.